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AUTHOR Gotsch, Constance M.; Herrera, Monica
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ABSTRACT

The Hispanic woman in New Mexico has lived in a changing rural environment that has urbanized only recently. This paper examines the comments of modern Hispanic women in eastern New Mexico to document their beliefs about change and stability in their lives. Ten women, ranging in age from 23 to 93 and spanning 4 generations, answered questions about their educations, families, religious training, and work. The lives of these women reflect many of the themes of previous research. Family structures and other social institutions have been similar across the generations. Hispanic women's value systems have not changed drastically from the early 1900s to the present, with a continuing emphasis on hard work, discipline, religion, and a supportive extended family. Although families have always encouraged girls to remain in school, women's access to more advanced education opened up only in the 1930s and 1940s. Increased education and career opportunities in the last few decades have, in turn, delayed the ages at which Hispanic women marry and bear children. This paper provides an overview of the history of New Mexico's women from the Spanish Conquest to the 1970s. This paper contains 18 references. (SV)

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The Cultural Values of Ten Hispanic Women in Eastern New Mexico

Constance M. Gotsch
Assistant Professor
Department of Communicative Arts and Sciences
ENMU
Portales, New Mexico

Monica Herrera
Counselor
Talent Search
ENMU
Portales, New Mexico

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New Mexico Women's Studies Conference
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Introduction

Traditionally for Hispanic women in New Mexico, values have centered on marriage and family. But times and outside influences have always changed. Since they first shared their culture with other people living on the frontiers of New Spain, conflicting ideas and opportunities have competed with the family for women's attention. These changes have affected the traditional values in Hispanic culture. Some values have vanished; some have emerged as new and important. Others have not changed at all; they've have simply taken a new form.

Jensen and Miller's book New Mexico Women Intercultural Perspectives examines social positions, attitudes, work, leisure, and interaction of all women in New Mexico from the time of Spanish conquest until the mid 1900s. The authors used legal documents, letters, and diaries to chronicle women's lives on the frontier, identifying stable and changing elements from within and outside of given cultures. Warren Beck, author of New Mexico A History of Four Centuries, offers a description of the state's boom growth from the 1930s until the 1960s. Employing both works for historical background, this paper will examine the comments of some modern Hispanic women in Eastern New Mexico to document their beliefs about change and stability in their lives.

Historical Perspectives

The first cultural exchanges that influenced Hispanic women's lives in New Mexico took place between Pueblo and Spanish women in the 16th and 17th centuries. Native American women cared for children, preserved and prepared squash, beans, and corn grown by men; and gathered wild food stuffs such as roots and berries. Skilled potters, they also wove and embroidered. These tasks Spanish explorers expected of them, but to the soldiers' surprise, Native American women also helped clean irrigation ditches, tended turkeys, distributed food, controlled property, and owned houses which they plastered themselves. Spanish women quickly learned the art, and used it well into the 20th Century. The two cultures also exchanged methods of food preparation and, Native American women learned to weave with wool from Spanish sheep. Many Spanish men married Indian women, since very few Spanish women accompanied the first explorers to the colonies in North America (Foote and Schackel pp. 20-30).

Native American women had no direct political leadership

vernment, though they had some voice in it. Spanish women found themselves in a similar situation after the Pueblo Revolt in 1680 killed most of their men. Women took responsibility for children, servants, and each other as they retreated to what is today El Paso, Texas. Once there, they pitched camp, organized plowing, planting and harvest; wrote wills, gave testimony, sold and bought property; and

managed cottage industries. Eight women came back to New Mexico as heads of households when General Diego Vargas Zapata led the reconquest in 1682. Many women also journeyed from Mexico City to the Santa Fe as thirteen, or fourteen year-old brides (Foote and Schackel pp.30; Hernandez pp.42; 45-47; 50-51; 53-54; 58-59; 62).

From the late 17th Century until the early 19th, New Mexico culture, religion, and politics remained closely related to 16th Century Spain. Deserts, hostile Indians, and Spanish policy forbidding foreign commerce kept New Mexicans isolated from other ethnic groups colonizing North America at the same time. Then, in 1821 Mexico won independence from Spain and opened trade with the United States. Two cultures with some opposing values met, and introduced startling ideas to each other. American women wore long-sleeved, high-necked dresses with skirts that swept the ground. They did not yet have the economic importance of the Hispanic woman whose work had developed the frontier. American women turned their property and wages over to their husbands at marriage. They assumed their husbands' names, and dared not acknowledge their sexual urges, whereas men did freely (Lecompte pp. 71-72).

Hispanic women dressed in loose short skirts and low-cut blouses, a costume cool, comfortable, and practical. They retained their own names after marriage, had legal rights in court and to the property they brought to marriage; and retained their own wages. While their society did not

condone promiscuity, it did not judge women by a sexual double standard, as did Anglo society. Hispanic women could freely express sexual feelings. While people did not condone prostitution, young girls sometimes had premarital sex. They married as young as twelve, but were not assumed subordinate to men. Infidelity was frowned upon for both sexes. Centuries of poverty had eroded social barriers. Master and servant originated in the same ethnic mix, and spoke the same language. People worshipped, socialized, and worked together. At parties, everyone danced with everyone else. People lived on a simple and wholesome diet, eating bread from unbleached flour, dried fruits and vegetables; fresh or dried meat, chili, and beans. They geared homes and clothing to convenient quick upkeep, and found plenty of time to dance and play, which startled some American women. Hispanic women also did many chores in groups at each other's homes. Some worked outside as seamstresses, weavers, gold panners, shepherds, laundresses, healers, merchants, ironers, and prostitutes. They farmed along with men (Lecompte pp. 71-77; 82).

While parents often arranged girls' marriages, priests made sure for the most part that brides and grooms came together willingly. Alcalde courts illustrated women's rights at the time. A cross between a judge and mayor in his small town, the Alcalde worked out a compromise between plaintiff and defendant, or submitted the case to outside arbitration. He did not rule by Mexican national law, since

no statutes were ever developed for the New Mexico area. The Alcalde made decisions based on what law he may have known and common sense. In his presence, women owned, inherited, loaned, pawned, or conveyed property. They could sue or be sued in court for theft, damages, and slander, and served jail sentences as did men. Mother or father could become a child's guardian or hold a minor's property in trust. The Alcalde also helped settle marital problems. Couples only sought divorce from Church courts after conciliation did not work. Men and women received equal punishment for adultery (Lecompte pp. 77-80; 82-85).

Despite their differences, interaction increased between Hispanic and Anglo cultures during the era of the Santa Fe Trail. The Americans annexed California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico into United States territory in 1846. Sixty-thousand Spanish-speaking people lived in the New Mexico area. Most of the 1,200 Anglos who poured into the new territory were men without families. They married upper class Hispanicas. During the Civil War, the Grand Army of the Republic sent the California Column to expel the Confederates from the Southwest. About 300 Union troops stayed in New Mexico when the war ended. They too wed Hispanic women. To the poor, marriage to an Anglo meant a raise in status. It also meant a strain on the Hispanic social structure. (Miller pp. 99-100; 103).

Life in isolated villages centered on the church with its patron saint. To be Hispanic was to be part of la

familia, both biological and social. The eldest male ruled the clan. Women did not question their decisions. Wives stayed at home during this period of history, but often fended for themselves when business took their husbands away from the ranch. In this way they maintained independence. When they married Anglo men, they found their husbands less inclined to patriarchal authority. The role of help mate which women played may have furthered their independence and economic contributions to the Territory (Miller pp. 104-107).

In their own way, they participated in the same New Mexico life as did Anglo women. By 1900 in Lincoln County, Hispanic women kept house and took in travelers. They helped plant fields, cared for goats, hogs, and cows; cut hay, churned butter, and planted apple trees. They also dug irrigation ditches and helped to maintain them, (177-78) as had Native American women before the Spanish conquest. Hispanic women also participated in the Country Life Movement between 1914 and 1919. The Movement both encouraged families on the farm to stay, and families who had left to return. It also looked for ways to improve farm and home management, and lessen cultural isolation (Jensen pp. 201-202).

In 1914, the newly-founded Agricultural Extension Service introduced canning. Hispanic women adopted the process slowly because they dried most of their food, grinding corn into flour for tortillas and tamales. They

also wilted melons and arranged them into strips for boiling later. Further they did not receive canning bulletins in Spanish until the late 1920s, and jars and pressure cookers were expensive pieces of equipment. Agriculture agents started canning co-ops. Then canning became an important summer activity (Jensen pp. 205-206; 209)

The Extension Service struggled to keep families on the land at a point when the United States as a whole was urbanizing. In 1890 93% of New Mexico's population farmed for a living. By 1920, the number had dropped to 82%, (Beck p. 283). Hispanic fathers had always divided land equally among children, and by the end of World War I, inheritances became so small that women had to seek work in town to supplement incomes. Also by the 1920s, New Mexico's homestead era had ended, and people had begun to move away from rural areas (Jensen pp. 232-238). By the 1930s a Hispanic woman's life still centered on farm and family, but the Depression had increased the migration to towns. By 1935 half the rural families had members with jobs away from the land (Jensen p. 233).

World War II increased the trend. Holloman Air Force Base, White Sands Missile Range, and Los Alamos Laboratory brought in a population hungry for consumer goods. Industry moved to the state, and the atomic age created a demand for the development of uranium resources. In 1956, manufacturing accounted for a little more than 11 percent of all earnings; agriculture just above 2 percent. By 1958

manufacturing firms employed 15,000 people and generated $134,700,000 dollars. A year earlier, Clovis generated 27 million dollars in income. Nine million of it came from Canon Air Force Base (Beck 271-272; 284; 290; 292).

By the mid 1950s sleepy ranch towns had expanded into small cities. Some urban centers had not existed 20 years earlier. In 1939 Los Alamos was a school for boys. By 1960, it had 12,000 people. Alamogordo had 21,000 people in 1960, an expansion of 220 per cent from a decade earlier. Between 1950 and 1960, urban areas gained 284,590 people, and rural areas lost 3,705. Albuquerque had a quarter of the state's population, 262,199. Santa Fe had a 34,676 people. Cities in the southeast corner of the state grew most quickly of all. Roswell had 39,593 people in 1960; Hobbs 26,275, Clovis 23,713, and Portales 9,695. Only 34% of all New Mexicans farmed (Beck pp. 283-284; 288-290; 292; 294).

The growth of urban centers has continued into the 1980s, though at a slower rate then in the 1960s. As of 1980, New Mexico had a population of 1,303,445, up just slightly from 1960s 1,048,796 (Rand McNally p. 70). Albuquerque's population had risen to 331,767; Santa Fe's to 48,899. Roswell boasted 39,676 people; Hobbs 28,794; Clovis 31,194, and Portales 9,940 (Rand McNally p.124)

This Study

The Hispanic woman in New Mexico has lived in a rural environment that has urbanized only recently. Change, however, is nothing new to it, and this study attempts to examine adaptation of at least a few women to circumstances caused by modern events. Ten people from eastern New Mexico, ranging in age from 23 to 93 and covering four generations, answered questions concerning their educations, families, religious training, and work. They also explained the importance of each to their lives. Their answers were compared in an attempt to find similarity and differences in values and attitudes from the early 1900s to the present. The women interviewed included Monica and Carla Herrera of Portales; Lola Montano from Tucumcari, Adelaida Sanchez Fort Sumner, and Agnes Saiz Seidel of Santa Rosa; Juanita and Michelle Ortiz of Roswell; Isabel and Savina Torrez of Hondo; and Trina Valdez of Clovis-Portales.

Educational Values

Traditionally, Hispanics have emphasized education for girls, sending them to school whenever possible, even early in the century. Parents maintained close contact with teachers, and older brothers and sisters tutored younger children. Some women, however, received more schooling than others. Their education was also very basic. Isabel Torrez went to school around 1900 in Mescalero because her father

worked with the Apaches. She attended for two weeks, contracted yellow fever, and dropped out. Her sisters finished grade school in that town.

About 14 years later, Lola Montano attended the Presbyterian missionary school in her home town of Trementina, New Mexico. To her, school was very special. "Life in Trementina was the best one we had in this world I think," she recalled with a laugh. "We studied much about the Bible, of religion. We studied spelling and reading, which I was more interested in, not arithmetic. I had a hard time with it, but my older brother would show me."

Her older brother was a teacher in the missionary school. Later, an Anglo teacher came. She married him. Teachers conducted classes in both Spanish and English. Montano completed eighth grade before she dropped out to marry.

As with Isabel Torrez' generation, not all women Montano's age had access to equal amounts of schooling. Seventy-eight-year-old Savina Torrez interrupted her formal education every March to help care for goats on the family ranch, a common chore according to Jensen and Miller's book. But work did not stop Torrez from trying to study all she could.

"I learned to read Spanish by copying my brother's letters. I can write a little English, but not that I learned in school," she told in her interview. She dropped out of school after 7th grade to care for her siblings and

ailing mother. After her mother died, Savina's grandfather encouraged her to return to school, offering to speak to local teachers so she could enter eighth grade. She declined his offer.

While Torrez did not complete grammar school, a woman 25 years younger than she continued past the first 8 grades. At this time, people had started to leave the farm for a life in town. Agnes Saiz Seidel began school at age eight in 1924. She spoke no English; her Anglo teacher spoke no Spanish. Siedel recalled that she "felt like a idiot because [she] couldn't understand [her teacher]."

Seidel graduated from high school in May of 1934 during the Depression, and attended Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico to get a teaching certificate because she could not find work in other fields. "There was actually no employment for anybody except school teaching. In those times anybody could get a teaching certificate if you attended, I believe, one summer term or whatever they call it. I think it's a term. So I went to Highlands...one summer term...It wasn't my choice because I did not want to teach school." She took 9 hours of education courses, but before a teaching job opened, she found employment as a typist with an early welfare program. She worked for various social service agencies for thirty-three years.

Through the 1930's, 40's and 50's, parents continued to nurture girls' desire to learn from early childhood, probably as a result of changing economic conditions which

forced them off the farm, gave them opportunities to move closer to schools, and generally improved educational standards after World War II. Monica Herrera, now in her early forties, played school in the family basement 1.

"We had little benches that my dad had made for us and the older ones were always the teachers. And boy, they really had some good discipline too. They'd just pop you right on the head if you didn't do your homework. So they taught us what they were learning in school."

Her older sister, Juanita Ortiz, recalled cleaning out the basement and bringing down old papers, pencils, "anything that looked like school supplies and playing school all summer." Ortiz and Herrera took classes in English, which they had to learn in school. Ortiz' mother encouraged her sisters and brothers to study by "offering to do the dishes after supper if we would come and study at the table. So of course every night, all of us had a lot of homework because we didn't want to do the dishes."

By the time Ortiz and Herrera entered school, parent groups such as PTA, had formed. Ortiz' mother became active in the Hondo School's chapter, and Ortiz believes that she was a more conscientious student because of her mother's interest in her education. Ortiz was valedictorian of her eighth grade class.

Extra-curricular activities increased in importance for girls of Herrera and Ortiz' generation. While Savina Torrez and Agnes Saiz Seidel played basketball (Seidel was also on

the cheerleading squad), Ortiz served on the student council, and was inducted into the Honor Society. She too was a cheerleader. She received early admission status at Highlands University, and graduated in 1963 with a degree in education.

Herrera was also a cheerleader and traveled with classmates to perform Mexican and Spanish dances at fiestas. Once again, her parents supported her. "Participation in school activities was always, always encouraged... maybe that's why all of us in our family have gone on and received an education...We have engineers in our family. We have lawyers, nurses; everyone has gone on and gotten some form of formal education and done well." Herrera married before she entered college, but eventually completed both an undergraduate and a masters degree in education. Both she and her sister remember specific teachers, such as Mrs. Ruby Douglas 2, who brought them newspapers, drilled them in English and mathematics, and generated excitement for learning.

Monica's daughter, Carla did as well in school in the 1970s, as did her mother in the 1950s. At Portales high school, Carla set some very high standards for herself. "I finished my freshman year with a 4.0 average, so I believe it was at that time that I decided that I wanted to go ahead and carry that through my high school years and I made it just a priority of mine to concentrate on my grades and to get A's.

Though I think grades are important, you should be motivated by just becoming more educated. I didn't take my education lightly and I studied very hard. I was always real good with numbers, so math was my favorite subject. Mrs. Jimmie Lees was my math instructor at Portales High. I was in her classes for four years and I believe the discipline and patience that's required to work through your problems can be applied to other subject also."

Besides her academic interests Carla Herrera involved herself in student government and became vice president of her class one year. She also played basketball and volley ball. She believes representing her class and working to follow her coach's instructions developed her leadership skills. Her mother, Monica, helped her plan her college education. Carla accepted an academic scholarship at the University of Denver in September, 1981. Her grandparents, aunts, and uncles also gave her money for books and tuition when she graduated from high school. She continued to make grades a high priority, with a marketing major. She was also involved in women's varsity sports, and received the Outstanding Woman award at the University of Denver in 1985.

Carla Herrera's cousin, Michelle Ortiz spent her junior high and high school years as did Carla. Interested in business, Ortiz enrolled in Notre Dame after high school. "Going to school at the University of Notre Dame gave me an opportunity to travel throughout the country...to see how different people live throughout the country and see some of

the differences and similarities; and was also a basis for my decision to move back to the southwest." Both Michelle and Carla traveled to Spain after graduating from college, where they studied business and languages.

Throughout New Mexico's history, Hispanic women have worked outside the home at certain periods. In the 17th, 18th and early 20th Centuries, economic conditions forced them to do this, giving them importance and legal status. The latter 20th Century has allowed them to continue that tradition. Other women are joining them, and together all are exploring new and exciting personal and professional possibilities.

Family Life

Hispanics have traditionally lived in extended families, with parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings taking care of each other. Parents maintained strict discipline. Fathers headed the household, firmly, but with love. Women married young and raised large families, working hard on homesteads, farms and towns, and teaching their children the value of investing time and labor in a project. As did their ancestors, women in this study lived in what Jensen and Miller's book describes as la familia.

Lola Montano recalled her father's discipline in the

1920s.. [He] was not mean with us. He did punish us if we deserved it." Punishment consisted of a "good whipping", but not too often. She attended the Presbyterian church in Trementina, with its cornerstone dedicated to her grandparents, who were among the town's first settlers. The church no longer exists, but once a year ex-parishioners hold a reunion.

Families in Trementina lived close to neighbors. If families lived out of town, children stayed close to the parents, in Isabel Torrez' case, on a homestead in the early 1920s. "We raised our family very poor but we always had them at home...We never had any problems with them. We had land to plant. Martin made them work." While she was growing up, Isabel's family was religious. Her grandmother sang hymns at sunrise. Isabel learned from her parents' example, and taught her children religion as well. She suggests that her granddaughters teach their daughters to "crochet and teach them to be good housewives. They should give their children good education and don't let them forget the religion that they were born with, for the first religion there ever was, was God's." Her great-granddaughter, Carla Herrera, said her parents saw to her religious education taking her and her brother to "the earliest mass possible" on Sunday morning. "Both my brother and I would fall asleep or we would start talking in church. I remember my mother reaching over and giving us a nice little pinch and telling us to settle down." Sometimes

she and her brother chewed gum in church, and one of the other parishioners would tell them that they were "terrible children to be chewing gum in church, so we should spit it out."

Girls began learning about housework early according to Savina Torrez, Isabel's daughter-in-law. Her parents weren't "too strict" with her in the 1920s but "[she] helped my mother in all [she] could at first, and afterwards, well, [she] was the one that helped her [mother] at home. [She] helped [her] father in the garden. [The family] had a garden." She helped her mother can vegetables and fruit, and make jams and jellies. Savina's mother had no recipes. She measured by the handful or by the verbal directions of friends. Because her family was poor, Savina learned to mend and repair clothes. She brought in wood and carried water because the family had no well.

Savina assigned chores to her children when they became old enough to help her. Pitching in around the house still started early. Savina's daughter, Juanita Ortiz, had a special box to stand on to help wash and dry dishes. She recalled that her mother "bragged on [her] about how much work [she] did." Juanita's mother's belief was "al ojo del amo, engorda al caballo," which meant that nurturing someone by keeping an eye on them made them do well. Discipline worked by eye too. Agnes Saiz Seidel lived with her grandparents in Santa Rosa after her mother died. Her grandmother "didn't spank...or things like that but she made

us tow the mark ...if we were doing something that she thought was wrong, all she had to do was look at us and we knew better." Before she went to live with her grand parents, Saiz Seidel's mother spoiled her because the child was one of the youngest in the family. The act was somewhat unusual, and today, Saiz Seidel is grateful for her grandparents' discipline.

Families worked hard together. Juanita Ortiz and her sister, Monica Herrera, obeyed as a team, wandering up the mountain near their Hondo home to listen for the family cow's bell so they could bring the animal home. As a teen-ager, Juanita picked apples in the summer. Monica heated water for washing on Saturday, pre-rinsed the laundry and scrubbed it on a washboard. Her mother made her hang clothes in a specific fashion for ease in ironing. When a sheet fell on the ground and got all dirty after "you'd spent forty minutes cleaning it," it was 'like a slap in the face." While Herrera washed, Ortiz helped preserve meat after fall butchering. Both girls earned money in the summer doing housework for an elderly neighbor. Twenty years later, Herrera's daughter, Carla worked in her parents' garden, though she did not like to pick corn as much as she liked to eat it.

Besides doing chores, families helped one another in other ways. Adelaida Sanchez cared for younger brothers and sisters. "I have four brothers and seven sisters and I didn't do too much [in school during the 1920's] because I

had to take care of the children while Mama was taking care of the babies. We never started school [in the fall] because we had to go help Daddy pick potatoes and pull broom corn in Clayton, New Mexico 3. We wouldn't start school until three months afterward...All I did was take care of kids and I got married at fifteen."

Savina Torrez' sister Monica, died at thirteen, and Savina helped care for her mother and younger siblings. "I did all the housework. I tended to the meals. Sometimes, I would go talk to my friends, but I would come in time to do my housework. I never had girls to come over and stay for a week. Like now they come and stay three or four days. Older siblings cared for Lola Montano and her younger brother, Luis, after their mother died in the 1920s. Their father helped too. Savina traveled on horseback between New Mexico ranches with her brothers as they helped their father with related chores. She enjoyed the trips. Her granddaughters, Michelle Ortiz and Carla Herrera parents' and relatives' support. They attended impromptu Christmas pageants at grandmother and grandfather Torrez' Hondo house; applauded dance recitals, sat through school functions, and went to Parents Day at college. They helped Carla buy sports equipment.

Aunts, uncles, parents, and grandparents have always encouraged children whether they learned discipline on the farm or on the basketball court. Isabel Torrez father or father-in-law taught her children to farm. "Papa was with us

for forty years. He would take them to work and taught them everything, to plant and everything. Thanks to God I raised a good family."

Sometimes fathers helped with kitchen chores. Savina Torrez husband, Eloy looked after the family when younger siblings were being born. Sometimes a doctor came to the house; sometimes a midwife came. Mr. Torrez delivered some of his children himself.

All the women interviewed in this study believed that their extended family relationships and their responsibilities taught them discipline. After the 1920s, they used their knowledge when economic changes led women away from the farm. Agnes Seidel found a job at age eighteen. Her home county needed a clerk to help handle Depression relief. She became a professional welfare worker for Guadalupe County for thirty-three years.

When household labor-saving devices became available, women remained disciplined. Mothers supported their daughters' efforts to work outside the home. Trina Valdez, now a school principal at Lindsey Elementary School in Portales, recalled her mother as a strong woman, who saw that her children received a quality education in Catholic schools. Valdez' mother worked as a cleaning lady and a hospital aide to earn tuition for her three daughters. She wanted them to be nurses, and each Christmas, gave them toy medical bags. Today, one sister is studying nursing.

Monica Herrera's daughter, Carla, spent more time

studying than cleaning, and many school activities took her away from her family. The 1985 University of Denver graduate and Woman of the Year named both school and home as the place where she learned diligence, self-control, and self-reliance. Carla's cousin, Michelle Ortiz, disciplined herself to work hard in high school. As a result, she received scholarships and grants that paid for most of her education at the University of Notre Dame, from which she graduated in 1984 as a business major. For both her and Carla, chores took the form of school work and summer jobs. For their mothers, chores took other forms as well as farm work. Along with her husband, Tony, Juanita Ortiz refurbished a house and added a swimming pool to their yard in Big Spring, Texas. They also finished college after Michelle's birth. Relatives helped. Savina Torrez looked after grandchildren while Monica studied.

Relatives still raise each other's children and grandchildren. In the late 1960s, Trina Valdez lived with an aunt and uncle in Albuquerque. They had no children and wanted one. When she reached her mid-teens, Valdez felt restricted by her aunt and uncle's discipline and returned to live in Clovis with her parents. Carla Herrera believed that since she was the first granddaughter in the Herrera family in the early 1960s, her grandmother, "whom [she and her brother] called Mama La-La spent a lot of time with [her]," taking special care of her, and seeing to her needs when she cried or was hungry.

While families disciplined women and gave them plenty of responsibility, girls found time for fun too, something very much in the Hispanic tradition according to Jensen and Miller. Women socialized with each other and with boys in the early part of this century much as girls do today, at dances, according to Savina Torrez. They did "polkas, waltzs and varsovianas". Everybody danced with everybody else, as they did when the Americans first came to the new Territory. Torrez even danced the Spanish quadrille with married men. However young people neither spent the entire evening dancing with one person nor dated as they do today. Her husband-to-be, Eloy, visited her once in a while. Her eldest brother, Diego [Salcido] gave her hand in marriage when she was twenty-six, rather late by standards of her time. Both her parents had died. Savina's mother-in-law, Isabel Torrez did not win her parents' approval of her friend, Martin Torrez. The couple eloped. Adults have always encouraged girls to have fun. Isabel Torrez wants her granddaughters to let their girls dance, "but only at decent dances", and only after the girls learned to "crochet and be good housewives."

Older Hispanic women in this study continued the tradition of marrying in their early to mid teens. In the 1960s, Trina Valdez met her husband, Frank in high school. She attended related social functions with him, and believed she had to be married by sixteen to avoid old maidhood. But unlike her mother's generation of women that ended its

education with marriage, Trina continued hers. She wanted to be different from her mother, who had been content to remain home with her children. Trina wanted to contribute something to society, since she believed herself to be "a visitor to this planet only once." Other women in Valdez' generation, such as Herrera and Ortiz met their husbands at school-related functions. They participated in Mexican, Spanish, and New Mexican dances at the Hondo Valley's annual fiesta. Valdez attended high school games in Clovis and Albuquerque. Both Herrera and Ortiz dated frequently. Ortiz met her husband, Tony, at a dance, when both were college students, and "taken by his good looks", she allowed him to take her home, if he would take her girl friends too. "He never lets me forget that I didn't trust him. We started dating very steadily, and at the end of our freshmen year, we became engaged in August and we were married at the end of our sophomore year in 1961." They both continued their schooling. Jaunita graduated from college in 1963 and found a job teaching in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Her husband then finished his bachelors degree. For Ortiz generation, marriage still came early, but a career could follow.

Michelle Ortiz and Carla Herrera dated as had their mothers. One summer while they were in junior high school, they struggled to get the lifeguard's attention at the Roswell pool. They tried swimming up to him with notes in their mouths, or wearing all their grandmother's jewelry. Nothing helped, probably because he was a college man, and

to him, they were mere babes.Neither young woman has married. Both are persuing careers, though both intend to find husbands and raise families as well. Their comments might signal a change in the marriage age for some Hispanic women.

Chores

All people perform some kind of daily chores. Hispanic women have been no exception. Lola Montano recalls her work around the farm as a girl in the 1930s. "I'd bring in the wood when it was chopped. Carry water from the creek, and lock up the chickens." Her parents had a garden. Montano's brothers hoed; she and her sisters helped can produce from harvests. "The people did much canning in those times. But we didn't have fruits in our area. Fruits came in from other places, but we bought some and the ladies would can. I am going to tell you about a refrigerator they made. You are going to laugh. They got a crate and covered it with gunny sacks and they would pour water on it all day so the food would stay fresh, and the ones who had wells, they would hang the milk down, because they had cows to milk. They raised pigs for the meat and chickens for the eggs. Now I have a refrigerator and an electric stove, I mean, of gas. We don't struggle now. Now we have everything at hand. That is why we get lazy."

Savina Torrez described the canning process this way. "I would help my mother in canning....My mother only canned

fruit, but the vegetables, we used them only during the time that there were fresh vegetables...We would peel a big pan full of apples and then she would add sugar...She would put them to cook on the stove and she would make her preserves and jellies. Things that were vaporized were peeled, like the peaches. She would boil the water and sugar that was put in and then she would can it...My mother did not use a pressure cooker...she would only vaporize it and would seal the jars right."

Food preservation and preparation have occupied the traditional Hispanic woman from the time of their arrival in New Spain. Juanita Ortiz helped her mother put up fruit and cure meat 25 years ago. She also picked apples with other teenagers, and took an opportunity to flirt with her boy friends in the process. People ate simply all through New Mexico's history, probably because they couldn't afford not to. With 12 in her family, Adelaida Sanchez grew up eating mush, beans, and macaroni. "We toasted white corn meal and then put water in it and that was our breakfast cereal. We didn't even have milk to put in it...Sometimes we'd put a little sugar in it." She and her family survived on plain beans. Her father could not afford potatoes.

Sanchez still cooks frugally, using a lot of beans. "It's about the cheapest food and I cook a big pot of beans and then I make burritos. My kids don't want to eat the plain beans...We do have meat now, but beans are the cheapest to fix..."

Younger women did not mention food preparation or preservation as extremely important to their lives, though Monica Herrera and Juanita Ortiz helped do it as youngsters. Neither Michelle Ortiz nor Carla Herrera mentioned any special dishes that they liked or disliked. Cooking economically did not concern them. Neither did canning processes.

As with simple cooking, hard work in the country continued well into the 1950s and 60s, and many women remembered it fondly. Monica Herrera recalls heating wash water and hanging out clothes as an "experience." She enjoyed being outside with "the birds singing and the sun shining." She and her sisters would organize the task, hanging all colored or white things first, and following many rules to ease caring for garments once dried. "It was just so difficult...But most of what I remember, it was fun." Monica laughed with her memories. "I haven't hung out clothes in years." Monica also shared chores with her sister, Juanita, with whom she wandered up the mountain to bring home the family cow to milk.

Until the 1950s, children managed their chores around school, often traveling long distances to reach class rooms once the farm work was done. Then, the economy changed. People moved into town more than ever, as indicated by Beck. Suddenly younger sisters led a life different from older ones. Adelaida Sanchez was raising children when the change

occurred. She moved from rural Clayton to the town of Quemado "Well, my older ones helped [with farm work] in Clayton, but just the older ones. We took them to pull broom corn. [The younger children] didn't do anything in Quemado just their school work and they were close to school."

School influenced the type and amount of chores women did, but girls took school work no less seriously than work around the farm. Expanded educational and career opportunities simply required them to substitute one kind of chore for another. Michelle Ortiz, a recent college graduate, stresses the importance of education to women younger than she, and and suggests that young Hispanic women seeking a successful career pay attention to their studies, especially in high school because during those years "you form a basis for your education". She encourages involvement in extra-curricular activities to broaden "your view of the world", and to "keep all possibilities in mind." Her great-grandmother, Isabel Torrez proposed that Michelle's mother's generation "be good housewives" and "learn to crochet". These skills were as important for a woman 40 years ago as is learning to operate a word processor today.

Independence

Hispanic women have centered their lives on their families, but as Jensen and Miller indicate, they exerted

their independence as well. With their responsibilities came extensive property and legal rights under Mexican law. In 1907, these rights diminished under American rule, which did not recognize the economic and social importance of women. After 1907 Hispanic women only retained equity if widowed, divorced, or single. As did Anglo women, Hispanic women brought their property to men at marriage. Earlier, they had retained it. No New Mexico woman could not dispose of her own property again until the 1970s (251).

During the homestead days, many women dutifully filed claims to expand husband's or brother's ranches. But some took other options, exerting independence that in many ways had been a part of their lives for 300 hundred years. In 1936, Savina Torrez would not yield to her father's pressure to take her own land. "They had to apply for [homesteads] and go stay on their lands five or six months and then they would get the grant. Then it would become theirs. All my brothers had their ranches like that, but not I.

During the same era, economics sometimes forced women to choose options besides homesteading. Agnes Sais Seidel graduated from high school and worked for her county relief agency during the Depression because she desperately needed a job. She stayed with the the social services system for 33 years, and just retired recently.

Some women have been independent all their lives; others have waited until their families have nearly grown, to exert

weatherization program and they needed somebody to volunteer and do outreach work. So I volunteered...I'd go o out and see who needed weatherization in their houses...I saw that the houses were done." Eventually, her efforts turned into a full-time paying job.

A half-generation later, women began exerting independence in another way. Monica Herrera went to college, something she had always wanted to do. Through a friend for whom she worked, Herrera got grants and scholarship money to attend Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell in the 1960s. She graduated eventually from the Portales campus with a degree in education, and completed her Masters Degree a few years later, with the support of her husband and children. She recalled that balancing family and school was hard but once she "even made the Deans list." Herrera now works for Eastern New Mexico University helping students of low socio-economic groups get the same opportunities for which she and women before her struggled.

Other women of Herrera's generation established independence much as she did, with chores and school activities as children, and scholarships as adults. If she wanted to see one, Trina Valdez walked to the movies and home again as a child on Sundays. Her parents also held her responsible for coming home on time, and once when she sat through two showings of Walt Disney's "Cinderella", her father spanked her because she had not returned at the

appointed hour. Both Valdez and Herrera have prepared their children for independence. Carla Herrera played girls basketball and volleyball in high school. She stated that her parents' presence at games, and meeting their high expectations gave her self-confidence.

Fathers and mothers have always been very close to daughters. Juanita Ortiz, recalls the velorio -- the traditional all-night prayer vigil for a saint or dead person -- and her father's role in it. "The men would build a big bon fire...and stand around it...and talk. Many times they didn't make it in to pray the rosary, but the women and children...prayed until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning." Children knew that papa kept vigil near the bonfire. That's all that mattered. Fathers were caring people just in a different way from mothers. Michelle Ortiz, Juanita's college-age daughter recalled her father taking her and her sister sledding on the hill in the back yard when the family lived in Michigan. He also reassured her when she had to have her tonsils removed. The frightened three-year-old clung to him when he carried her into surgery. He showed her the mask she would wear while receiving anesthetic and said she would look "just like batman". Eager to emulate her hero, Michelle settled down.

Fathers have always been good at settling kids down. Agnes Saiz Seidel recounts a settling encounter with her father in the 1930s. "My older sister, who was four years older than I quit school to get married at 15 to get out from under the strict discipline at home. And I as a fool thought that if she could quit school, I could too. So in the middle of the term in January, I quit school and went to live with my married sister. The following September, my Dad bought me a bunch of clothes and a new little trunk and he says 'you're going back to school'. So I stayed in school from then on."

A generation later, fathers continued to encourage education -- and curiosity. Monica Herrera took a trip to El Paso with her father. She and one of her sister climbed on top of a load of apples he was taking into the city market. When he found the children, he bought them some new clothes. She saw a train from the home of a friend and feared it would "run over us." She still likes to visit El Paso. When her father wanted to find her in a crowd, he whistled a special tune. Herrera used the same notes to call her own children. Herrera respects her father, who despite serious and stressful illness throughout his life worked very hard "to try to accomplish what he wanted to for his family."

Herrera's grandmother, Isabel Torrez, had a close relationship with her father too, in the early 1900s. She

and her sister visited him after he and his wife separated. "We had supper on a crate. He had a crate put for us. When he came with summer, he had crackers and cheese, sardines and honey. Then when we sat down to eat, he said, "how good is the bread with cheese, along with its honey, but much better is a kiss from a beautiful lady.

Religious Training

Religion has played a large part in traditional Hispanic life, as Jensen and Miller point out. In family groups, women have taught their children the rosary and prayers, and have helped develop an important part of New Mexico existence from the homestead days. Isabel Torrez' family built a church. " Our Lady of Guadalupe 5, in Hondo. We furnished the land and we made funds to build the church." In 1967 it was moved to make way for a road. The Baptists rented it for a while. Now it sits in ruins.

Religious activity centered in the home as well as the church. Isabel's daughter-in-law, Savina, recalls velarios or Saint's vigils. "They had velorios in the houses long ago. I don't see that there are velorios now. They just have what they call prayer meetings. Long ago, they would keep vigil for St. Antonio, Christmas Day and many people that

had promises had velorios year after year." She learned her catechism from her mother, who couldn't read, but knew many prayers in Spanish. Savina took her first Communion on St. Patrick's day from a traveling priest. She does not remember interacting with nuns.

Many women recall their mothers as the center of religious life, such as Trina Valdez, who called her mother a "very religious" woman. Trina had formal religious education in Catholic schools, where "the nuns were super people, who understood Hispanics and had very high expectations of us." Valdez always behaved in school, believing that the ":Blessed Mother" would be "very much disappointed in [her]" if she did not obey her teachers.

Respect for the Virgin Mary began early. Every night during the months of May and October, Juanita Ortiz and her brothers and sisters "knelt down as a family, and with [their] mother leading [them) we prayed the rosary...There were always a couple...horsing around during the rosary and they had to kneel and do the rosary by themselves. I didn't have any formal catechism training, but we went to mass every Sunday with my mother. She always sat in the front pew and made sure that we sat quietly and listened or we were pinched."

Though children learned the importance of religion early, they sometimes found it difficult to be obedient. Carla Herrera said her mother, Monica disciplined her in

church with "a nice little pinch" more than once when she didn't sit quietly. Carla received formal religious training in church, though she did not attend Catholic school. Neither she nor her cousin, Michelle Ortiz, mentioned religious activities taking place at home.

While Hispanics have traditionally practiced Catholicism, one of these women indicates that they have gotten along well with Protestants. Lola Montano grew up under the influence of a Presbyterian missionary. "[Her] name was Miss Alice Black. This lady established the little place of Trementina. She built a hospital and started a community. People from the surrounding areas would gather there. There was no such thing as religion there. We were all brothers and sisters. We were all friends.

Conclusions

The lives of the women interviewed for this study appear to reflect many of the themes described by Jensen and Miller. Older participants speak of preparing simple foods, doing farm chores, participating in animal care, going to communal social gatherings, and being part of extended families. While early in the century women stayed close to home and family, they ventured outside the home later as they had done periodically in the past, asserting independence and demonstrating resourcefulness in times of need and change.

However, the women in this study indicated something

that Jensen and Miller did not mention in their book: a stress on education by their families for women since the early 1900s. Parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles have encouraged girls to stay in school. However in the teens and 1920s, not all women had a chance to receive schooling. Helping raise large families, coping with parental illness, and doing demanding farm work occupied their time. But judging from the comments of the older women, girls received as much education as their families could afford, or as much as they themselves wanted.

Women appeared to begin to have more access to more advanced learning in the 1930s. The dearth of jobs during the depression which led to Agnes Saiz Seidel's summer term at Highlands University, suggests that pre-World War II economic conditions drew Hispanic women away from their traditional roles as wife, mother, and care taker, since they needed to support themselves or their families. To achieve this goal required more education, so they began to enter universities. These new opportunities led them to higher economic levels. Improved family resources allowed their daughters time to complete educations beyond the high school level.

Schooling for Hispanic women in the early part of this century was bi-lingual. The emphasis shifted to English only classes in the late 1920s, according to Saiz Seidel. Perhaps women's' chances to learn both English and Spanish, whether formally or informally, offered them many more

opportunities in New Mexico's bi-cultural society then had they remained uni-lingual.

While some extracurricular activities existed for the women who had formal education in the early part of the century, students in the 1950s had many more activities outside of class than did their mothers or grandmothers. Through school clubs, student government, and sports, women gained leadership skills and traveled away from home, where they broadened their world experience.

Each generation of parents has reaffirmed the need for formal education. As school activities and parent-teacher communication became more organized, Hispanic parents willingly joined PTAs and attended basketball games. Extended families encouraged girls to attend school by showing interest in and paying for educations. The girls responded well to the encouragement by becoming excellent students and in later generations, developing leadership skills to apply to home and outside social situations. The value which Hispanic families place on education has not changed in the past 87 years. The opportunities for women to attend school have increased greatly, along with economic and social opportunities. They have taken advantage of the chance to learn.

From the beginning of the century until now, discipline extended into all facets of these Hispanic women's lives as they grew up. Parents expected them to help both mothers and fathers at home. Sometimes, men helped their wives in

the kitchen or with child care, as did Savina Torrez' husband. Sometimes men did not help. Torrez stated that her brothers never helped her in the house when she was living with her parents. Fathers, however, did spend a lot of time with girls, both at work and play, giving them confidence during moments of stress, taking them on wonderful adventures, and disciplining them when necessary.

Fathers were not the only people helping at home. Adult aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and parents helped each other. They also taught children to work on farms or in school either by showing them tasks or by supporting their activities. While mothers of Isabel Torrez' generation encouraged their girls to be housewives, mothers of Trina Valdez' time encouraged careers by doing such things as giving them toy nurse kits for Christmas, and sending them to the best schools possible at great expense. As women began working outside the home, relatives encouraged them by providing help such as child care, or money for books and tuition. Needs changed, but the cooperative spirit did not. The extended family described by Miller and Jensen stayed in tact.

Judging by the testimony of these women, families seem to have always given girls chores and responsibilities at home. Until mid-century these consisted mostly of farm or garden work. By the 1950s, girls began to take on responsibilities in school as well. As more women attended

high school and became involved in extra-curricular activities, attitudes concerning the relationship of school and chores shifted. Savina Torrez attended school sporadically after she had contributed to the running of her father's ranch. Her children performed chores around their lessons and school activities. Gradually, household chores became less important in women's lives. Middle-aged and older Hispanic women remember doing many domestic chores as they were growing up. Women under 25 do not mention housework as part of their girlhood. Probably electric appliances such as washing machines allowed mothers to do laundry and other chores without help, or girls performed tasks quickly and and turned to school tasks, which they recall more clearly. This changes reflects the importance of education for women. Even the women who had little chance for schooling, such as Isabel Torrez encouraged grandchildren and great-grandchildren to study.

All the women interviewed met men at social functions, usually dances. Early in the century these balls may have been in the form of community or private parties. Isabel and Savina Torrez, and Lola Montana did not indicate their source, but the dances they attended were unlikely to be school-related. None of these women stayed in school very long, and they did not have many extra-curricular activities. They did not date, though occasionally young men and women visited each other's homes. By the 1950s, girls met boys at school parties and dated quite frequently.

Until the 1980s, women have married young. Early in the century, they found husbands at 15 or 16, as had their ancestors who first came to New Spain. But by mid-century, they stayed single until their late teens or early 20s. Today, the two youngest women interviewed are considering marriage after schooling is completed. Both are in their mid 20s.

Interviewees who married before the 1930s indicated that they left school and stayed home with families. In the 1930s, women stated that they completed high school and then married. Some, such as Agnes Saiz Seidel and Adelaida Sanchez, worked after marriage. By the 1950s, women said they finished high school, college, and in two cases, graduate school either before or during marriage. They started or continued careers after marriage. The two youngest women plan marriage after they start careers. Marriage, while still very important to Hispanic women, may share priority with other goals and options in the late 20th Century. No longer is an unmarried 16 year-old an "old maid", as Trina Valdez feared would be her fate in the 1960s. Increased education and economic opportunity probably delays marriage in the late 20th Century.The women have approached their new possibilities with the same well-learned sense of purpose with which they pursued their traditional choices. The ethics of hard work, and

discipline, and the family support structure have not changed for these Hispanic women from the beginning of the century until now. However, the principles have taken new forms. Savina Torrez describes the change best perhaps. When asked if she would have liked to have a career outside the home, she replied,

> Well, with all the family that I had, I wouldn't have liked it because to go to work and come home tired...I passed my time here at home very busy preparing [my children's] clothes and their meals and doing all I could for when my family came home from school...Now all of [my daughters] are working. The only one that stayed more at home was Martha. She goes to school now after her girls and her husband come home...when mine were small I couldn't do like they do now. They go to school or they take them with the baby sitters and I didn't. I had to take care of my children.

Always responsible, and having related legal privileges throughout most of New Mexico's history, women have become more independent as they have gotten more education. In the 1930s, they often married to get away from strict discipline at home. In the 1950s they left home to attend school activities, which exposed them to new people and new ideas. The youngest women interviewed indicate that their parents still disciplined them firmly. However parents were strict in a broader sense. They expected girls to perform well in school, on the basketball court, or in the local dance troupe, as well as at home and at church.

Economics have also helped women increase independence. During the 1930s, they needed to support families by working

outside the home. Gradually, this practice became accepted by the larger society, combined with education, and created new career and independence opportunities for women.

Women have learned religion from mothers as part of their disciplined upbringing. Women in their mid-30s to their early 90s spoke of mothers and grandmothers bringing religion into the home and teaching catechism to children. Older women, such as Savina Torrez did not receive formal religious training. Church attendance was irregular because priests did not come to ranches to serve mass often. Juanita Ortiz, Savina Torrez daughter attended church with her mother, but received no formal catechism. Probably improved transportation and assignment of priests to country parishes allowed more formal worship to farm families.

Increased formal education and economic opportunities also enhanced religious training for women. In the 1950s, Trina Valdez went to Catholic school, because her mother was able to find a job to send her. Nuns gave her secular education as well. In the 1970s the religious center moved slightly away from the home. Women in their 20s speak of attending Mass with their parents, but so not speak of religious activities, such as velarios at home. Several of the older women, indicate these vigils for the saints and the dead to be a thing of the past. Probably the increased availability of churches and church-supported schools has decreased the need for formal worship at home, though religion is still an important part of the Hispanic

woman's life.

Hispanic women's value systems have not changed drastically from the early 1900s to the present. Family structures and social institutions are similar across generations, according to the women interviewed. The things they do within their value systems have changed with increased economic and educational opportunity.

Notes

1. Hondo Valley, Hondo, New Mexico 50 miles west of Roswell, in Lincoln County.

2. Mrs. Ruby Douglas, neighobr, and English Teacher at Hondo Public School.

3. Clayton, New Mexico, located in Union County in the northeast corner of New Mexico.

4. Quamado, New Mexico located in Catron County in Western New Mexico, north of the Gila National Forest, and west of the Cibola National Forest.

5. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Hondo Valley.

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